

HEART OF THE PRAIRIE  
The Story of an Illinois Town

PART ONE

Opening Chorus: "Wapella Loyalty Song"

Episodes:

- I. THE REDMAN YIELDS HIS PLACE
- II. THE LONE ELM TREE
- III. THE IRON HORSE
- IV. A VILLAGE IS BORN

Dance: "The Spirit of the Years"

- V. Education Lifts Its Banner
- VI. THE HUSKING BEE
- VII. "ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS"

Midway Chorus: "Wonderful Wapella"

Intermission (10 minutes)

PART TWO

Dance: "Wings of Progress"

Episodes:

- VIII. ON WITH THE SHOW
- IX. THE VILLAGE BOARD MEETS
- X. THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE
- XI. MAIN STREET
- XII. WAPELLA IN THE WARS
- XIII. CITIZENS OF TOMORROW

Closing chorus: "Heart of the Prairie"

Epilogue: Chief Wapella (silent pose)

WAPELLA LOYALTY SONG

Air: "I'll Take you Home Again, Kathleen" (slowly, with feeling)

Opening chorus:

We sing, Wapella, through the years,  
With ardent voices raised on high,  
And still, with all our hopes and fears,  
We bring a love that can not die.  
For though in distant paths we roam,  
Forever shall we turn to you,  
And find within your arms a home,  
A haven always strong and true.

Refrain:

Our dear Wapella, we unite  
As children in this prairie town:  
And promise here, with honor bright,  
To place upon your head a crown!

Our mother fair, we sing your praise  
As you a century unfold,  
And gather in your present days  
A harvest full of shining gold.  
Here many people yet unborn  
Will call you guardian and friend  
So as we greet the smiling morn  
We pledge to serve you till the end.



NARRATOR (Picks up quickly as "Wapella Loyalty Song" ends)

"So as we greet the smiling morn, we pledge to serve you till the end!" This is indeed the story of a community that goes on, and on and on--into the mystical future, far as the eye or even the mind can reach ahead. It is the story of an Illinois town, Wapella, through 100 years of history and development, through changing scenes and changing population, through a century of American progress in the Midwest.

Wapella does not lay claim to being a city, or to having many famous men and women to give to the world. But Wapella does point with pride to its place on the map and to its local achievements, as well as its occasional contribution to the national welfare.

Wapella, like the Republic itself, has changed with the times. Progress is made in various ways and our citizens have well played their parts in the steady drams of community living. We have our children, the hope of the future, our schools, our churches, and our places of business, where men and women work and serve for the common good. Yes, and we have, lying all around us, the rich black land that nourishes our bodies, our minds, our homes, and our spiritual beings. This marvelous wealth, both tangible and intangible is a true gift of God! Wapella "Heart of the Prairie forever shall be!"

Here in the central part of Illinois, with its gentle rolling ground and its slow-moving streams, lived the first inhabitants of Wapella, long before the Whiteman came. They were the Indians, found in small villages and roving bands of nomadic character. They rarely cultivated the soil, depending almost entirely on hunting wild game--deer, turkey, rabbit, and other animals then abundant in this area. The chase, the domestic crafts in which the women might engage, and various forms of dancing constituted their chief enjoyment.

Wouldn't it be nice to travel back and look upon a primitive group on a typical day. Well, brother and sister of 1954, here's your chance.

#### Episode I: "The Redman Yields His Place"

(Indian tepee; preparations for a fire. Hunters arrive with game. Salutations exchanged and short dance celebrating the successful chase. Enter three chiefs, with other warriors.)

BLACKHAWK: This is our land, and we will fight for it.

KEOKUK: The white men are like sands on the shore of the ocean. We are few in number and do not have the weapons to resist them. It is a hopeless task and much needless blood will be shed. Let us retire peacefully to the westward,--to the land across the great river, and there spend our lives in peace.

BLACKHAWK: I have seen treaties made with the white man. I have watched the land of our fathers turned over to the greedy strangers. I have seen the Illini yield and move away to join the Iowas. I refuse to change my rightful home!

WAPELLO: I am chief of the Fox and confederated tribes of the Sacs and the Foxes. I have viewed many suns and moons, I know what it means for our people to go upon the warpath. I have heard the cries of the widows and their children; and I have heard the howling of the wolves in the night. The habit of speech I have not. You two great chiefs may well surpass me. But I will say what I think, and I have been thinking all day Keokuk has well spoken and with him I agree. We will go west across the Father of Waters.

(much argument and gesture)

BLACKHAWK: (Taking up tomahawk and waving it wildly): We will not be pushed aside. We will not give up our chosen hunting grounds. We will fight! (He rushes out, leaving Keokuk and Wapello standing with arms folded. Some braves decide to follow. The two chiefs arms folded retire on opposite sides of stage as the women start to prepare the noonday meal).



## THE LONE ELM TREE

NARRATOR:

A mile south of Wapella on the old state aid road is a monument with this inscription: The historic Lone Elm erected by DeWitt Clinton chapter Daughters of American Revolution June 14, 1923. Beside this monument is a young elm tree symbolizing the lone elm tree which served as a landmark through this part of the prairie. Tradition has it that it was the only tree for miles around, and since it stood approximately halfway between Chicago and St. Louis, as well as between Bloomington and Decatur, travelers came to look forward to reaching the Lone Elm and knowing their journey was thus far along.

Under its spreading branches many an early pioneer paused to rest and meditate on the future of the surrounding countryside.

But, wait a minute. I see some travellers stopping now.

Episode II:

"What a country! Look at those swamps. This land is good for ducks only. It'll never amount to anything. No trees except for this lone elm."

"Well, at least we are halfway to St. Louis. I hope no unfriendly Indians show up. They say there were some hung from these very limbs."

"Well, I wouldn't accept this land and pay taxes on it. Any fool should know the prairie will always remain a hunting ground for deer, and the swamps for ducks and geese."

"Yes, If I were mad at someone and wanted to get even with him, why, I would just give him a prairie farm."

"How many days do you figure it will take you to get to Chicago?"

"Why, I'm almost there. Only 12 days and I'll be there! If it rains, why, maybe 14. Believe me, a man can surely get around today. These blazed trails beat the ones I used to follow."

"I see folks are still digging for the buried treasure rumored to be placed here by highway-men. This has certainly ruined some good sod around the elm."

"One thing about this tree--you can at least sit in the shade and then water your horse in the slough off to the east."

NARRATOR: As this scene fades from night we may well be interested in the location of the Lone Elm Tree today. The Illinois Central Railroad, the Illinois Terminal System Highway 51--all of these prominent means of transit have passed very close to the site of this tree. The slough, now known as Ten Mile Creek, was deepened for the sake of better drainage, and where swamp grass flourished and the frogs croaked is now some of the community's most valuable land, often selling for over \$500 an acre.

As runs the hourglass, so runs America, a nation of perpetual wonders.

Episode III:

NARRATOR: It's now time to hear how the Iron Horse first came to Central Illinois and through our town. That's what the train was called all over this pioneer country. The part of this fabulous Iron Horse in the making of our local community is a part of the new and ever extending caravan of American History as a whole.

Did you hear that whistle, and that bell, and that puffing of steam? (Sound effects representing arrival of train) You didn't. Well, I guess I was just letting my imagination wander!

NARRATOR: A hundred years ago the pioneer settler drove his slow-moving ox team across the lonely prairies, sometimes a hundred miles or more to have a few bushels of wheat ground into flour or to exchange the products of his toil for salt, thread, calico and other necessities which he could not produce at home. Luxuries were rare.



Food was plain. Reading matter was scarce. Life was primitive. The difference between life then and now is due in no small measure to the improvements in transportation. Railway transportation was the key to the prairies. It enabled farms far removed from navigable streams to be opened and cultivated profitably. It created towns and cities and great industrial centers--all markets for the farmers' products.

Wapella is here today in this community because of the railroad, the "Illinois Central" and your knowledge of Wapella will not be complete without a little idea of the part the I.C. railroad played. Let's step on the magic carpet and be whirled back several decades--back to a box on a street corner where we can listen to one of the old-timers, A. D. Metz, telling a small boy about the early days. ( Lights up.)

MAN: (Sitting on box and using cane for emphasis): Yes, son, I've seen a lot of changes in Wapella since 1855, when I first came here as a boy. The town hadn't been laid out officially yet, not for a year.

BOY: Why did they put Wapella here? Why didn't they put it some where else?

MAN: That's a good question, son--one I can't answer exactly, but one of the main reasons was because the Illinois Central Railroad had just gone through in 1852. The railroad company, with an eye to settling up its territory, gave preference to workers with families. Many were fresh from the old countries. A thousand men came direct from Ireland.

BOY: Gee, that's a long way to come.

MAN: Naturally these workers and their families grouped together in camps at certain intervals along the right of way, and Wapella happened to be one of the sites. A lot of credit must be given to those early builders of a railroad, especially this one. There were very few towns and the route traversed a wild, desolate region, where one might travel for a whole day without coming in sight of a single human being. All of the work had to be done by men of brawn, with shovels and picks and sledge hammers and crow bars. The lumber for bridges and cross ties came from Michigan, Wisconsin, and Southern Illinois. The iron rails came from England.

BOY: Then why didn't Wapella get to be as big as Clinton, Bloomington, or Decatur? They are on the same railroad.

MAN: Wapella did have ambitions, son. If it had been made a central point on the railroad, as planned, it would have become a city. Maybe I'm a little glad it didn't. If Wapella had got to be the county seat and the county line had been moved north, to take in a part of McLean county, to make Wapella nearer the center of DeWitt County, things really would have been different. When the railroad shops, machine shop and round house and the hotel were moved to Clinton, Wapella missed its chance and never got much bigger.

BOY: Well, how did the railroad make the changes you suggested?

MAN: The railroad brought to an end, once and for all, the isolation the people had experienced on the lonely prairie. It brought merchandise and the markets of the world to their door. It brought new neighbors from the old world. The Illinois Central launched a widespread publicity campaign to draw attention to the climate, resources and opportunities of this then "for western country." It advertised all over New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and the Southland, as well as in England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Sweden, and Norway. These Illinois Central advertisements carried illustrations of luxurious crops of grain, shocks of wheat, baskets brimming with corn, vegetables piled on high, and horses and cattle grazing on the fertile prairies--a scene of peace and plenty, beckoning the hardy sons of toil to "Illinois, the Garden State of America."

"The Finest Farm Lands--Equal to any in the world!" ran one of the advertisements that attracted thousands to Illinois in the 1850's and 1860's. This land was purchased for a down payment of only 50¢ an acre, with seven years to pay the remainder. If the railroad hadn't been built when and where it was millions of acres of this



Illinois land would have been reduced to  $12\frac{1}{2}$  an acre under the Graduation Act of 1854.

BOY: Gosh, Grandpop. I have 50¢. Do you suppose I can buy an acre of ground?

MAN: No, son, \$500 wouldn't buy a lot of land around this town today, and the railroad is one of the parties responsible for that.

NARRATOR: The Illinois Central Railroad could tell a lot more of its history in the early days of Wapella. The amazing speed of 15 miles an hour when people rode from Wapella to Clinton on the very first train in 1852 was a most wonderful achievement. To some the Iron Horse was a strange, even fantastic intruder, not to be trusted. It came from the realm of fairyland. Some of the farmers expressed doubt as to whether the smoke might kill their crops or the steam whistle might cause their milk cows to go dry and the chickens to quit laying! (sound effects again) No fooling this time! That was the south-bound freight, in this good year of our Lord, 1954.

But I hear already one of the special voices of History. It is strong and clear, and it is telling about the way a town was born. (Voice from opposite side of stage.)

#### Episode IV

#### A TOWN IS BORN

##### First Voice of History:

It was David A. Neal who laid out the village of Wapella in 1854 and gave it its name. He was an employee of the Illinois Central Railroad and also vice president of the company. The first lots were sold in the spring of '55.

But maybe you'd like to take a peep into the past, and watch the surveyors of the Central measuring, this very ground you are on tonight. Can you see them plainly. There they are, checking their distances and working numbers in their notebooks. Well, this was the necessary preliminary work that started a town on its way through history. (Ad lib movements by 3 men).

This railroad survey was recognized by the county surveyor, Alexander Barnett, but in 1861 another survey was run and officially recorded.

Then on February 9, 1867, the first meeting to plan incorporation of the village was held. Let's go back and watch them organize. That's Daniel Thompson in charge, just elected chairman of the meeting. What a long black coat! The secretary is F. M. Fanlue--the one with the beard, and the papers. Listen closely; Mr. Fanlue is announcing the result of a vote. Yes, it's 37 for and 17 against on the proposition for incorporating the town. Really, that's exactly how Wapella was born. (lights dimmed to show lapse of time).

A week later these same people met again on February 16 and elected their trustees. Look--they're just being introduced: Daniel Thompson, T. Green; E. Swift; F. M. Fanlue; A. D. Metz. (Men rise as names are called. blackout)

At that time the region around Wapella was very swampy and overgrown with tall grass. Wild animals of various kinds roamed here, and water birds were numberous. Many a flock of wild ducks and geese made shadows across the sun as they went north or south at the change of seasons.

NARRATOR: (Breaking in): Swamps or no swamps, Wapella thrived and began to look like a village right here in the heart of the Illinois prairie. By the way, the original spelling of the name was W-A-P-E-L-L-A-H, meaning, "He who is painted white" after the Indian brave who was one of Chief Wapello's family. Wapella has the distinction of being the only village, town or city in the U. S. to bear this name. You will of course remember that great chief, one of the Fox tribe, who used to call this home. Chief Wapello had been distinguished from early years for his valor, kindness, and benevolence toward his people, and also for his honesty and friendship toward the white man. No wonder he was for himself a universal regard.



You saw him at the beginning of this historical panorama. He really did seem like a pretty nice fellow, after all. But I'll bet he doesn't care for centennials, especially if they lure him often back from his Happy Hunting Grounds! Pardon me for interrupting the Voice of History, which just now certainly has the right of way.

First Voice of History (resuming the record:

The controversy between Wapella and Clinton as to which would have the county seat (that was back in 1857, and again in 1879) was finally settled in favor of Clinton and the Central moved its basis of operations to our neighbor to the south.

The first settler in this section was Gibson Coy in 1853. He became the first justice of the peace, elected in 1856. He built a little shanty on what is now Main Street.

Philip Donnigan was the second inhabitant living on north Main Street. Daniel Thompson sold the first goods and also served as postmaster. The mail was brought to his store, and everybody helped himself.

William Graves was the first blacksmith, with his shop on Locust Street.

A. J. Foster ran a hotel, in a building that had been a private dwelling. But the clock is running out, and we'll let you read more about the other pioneers in the new centennial history, which is a modern voice, in print, doing my work for me and helping me keep alive the story of Wapella, Heart of the prairie.

After Episode IV:

NARRATOR: The spirit of the years, with beauty and rhythm, hovered over the new village like birds of colored plumage, lifting their voices in the harmony of nature.

( 1st dance )

"Spirit of the Years"

NARRATOR: Again a voice of history sounds among us. It is now telling of the way the Goddess of Learning came to dwell in our midst. Let us hear how Education lifted its banner in Central Illinois. (Voice from opposite side of stage.)

Episode V: Education Lifts its Banner

#### SECOND VOICE OF HISTORY

When Illinois was admitted to the Union in 1818 our first governor, Shadrock Bond, went on record in favor of increased educational opportunities. He was keenly aware of the importance of training for the masses, and in his inaugural address he said, "No employment can be more engaging than that of husbanding the resources which will spread through all classes of our fellow citizen the means of wisdom and knowledge which in the freedom of our institutions, will make the child of even the poorest parent a useful member of society and an ornament to his country."

Nine months after our admittance as a state, the state assembly passed an act which put into swing a program for the public schools of Illinois. In a preamble to this act the following patriotic sentiment was expressed: "To enjoy our rights and liberties we must understand them; security and protection of these rights and privileges ought to be the first object of a free people. We believe that the mind of every citizen in the republic is the common property of society and constitutes the basis of her strength and happiness. It is therefore the duty of a free government to encourage and extend the improvement and cultivation of the intellectual capacities of the whole." Just ten years later, DeWitt County, in complete harmony with the state educational program, began to organize schools of common learning. Though two earlier schools had been held in the homes of pioneer families, WAPELLA TOWNSHIP PROUDLY CLAIMS THE HONOR OF HAVING THE FIRST SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY TO BE HELD IN A BUILDING CONSTRUCTED ESPECIALLY FOR SCHOOL PURPOSES.



This first building, erected in 1832, was located about one and a half miles north of Wapella. The school was taught by Edom Shugart. In 1848, while other people were rushing to California, Wapella township got a new frame school house, with Trustum Hall as the first wielder of the birch to hold forth there.

NARRATOR: (Breaking in): In our days of prosperity, surrounded as we are with material advantages, we can form no adequate idea of the trials, hardships and privations endured by the pioneers of this country. The youth of that time never dreamed of the comforts enjoyed by the school children of the present. They were compelled to make long journeys over bramble and bush, through mud, snow, cold and heat, to get a meager education. Let's drop into one of those little schools and see a class in session:-

Episode V:

SCHOOLMASTER: You will pass to the front of the room to submit yourselves to the daily spelling lesson.

TOMMY: Sir, I lost my book, and I don't know what the words are.

SCHOOLMASTER: Your carelessness appalls me. You must suffer the consequences. Take your place with the others. Susan, you will spell the first word. It is Village.

SUSAN: V I L (VIL)-LI (LI)-A G E (AGE), VILLIAGE.

SCHOOLMASTER: Most incorrect. You should be ashamed. Virginia, you may show her how to spell the word.

VIRGINIA: VIL (VIL)-LAGE(LAGE), village

SCHOOLMASTER: My dear girl, never have I heard a better recitation. Susan, I hope your knowledge of the catechism can be better demonstrated. Next I'll call on Jacob. You will now spell the second word. It is prairie.

JACOB: PRA(PRA)REY(REY), PRAREY.

SCHOOLMASTER: You little dunce. You've spelt nothing at all. There is no such thing as p-r-a-r-e-y. I shall not ask anyone to correct such a silly spelling, but give the proper form myself. It is p-r-a-i-r-i-e. Ignorance is one of the worst sins and must not be tolerated. Tommy, we shall see how the loss of your book will affect your knowledge of a simple word, one that very small children all know. This word is cat.

TOMMY: I can spell cat, and also catfish, which is made up of two words, cat and fish.

SCHOOLMASTER: I doubt whether you could ever make such a difficult combination. But we shall see.

TOMMY: One is C-A-T and the other is F-I-S-H. B ut when ypu put 'em together, you spell 'em K-A-T-F-Y-S-H.

SCHOOLMASTER: Book or no book, this nonsense must end. Come here, you little numskull and feel the tender mercy of my hickory rod. (Seizes boy, holds him over his knee, and administers the promised licking, as the lights dim out).

NARRATOR: How times have changed. But if the early schoolmasters were severe, and did not spare the rod for fear of spoiling the child, the youngsters grew and grew and the little schoolhouses flourished and improved, and all of us are proud of what has come to pass today. But let's listen again to what History is saying.

SECOND VOICE OF HISTORY (resuming the record): As time marched on, the residents of Wapella cared for the needs of its future citizens by planning a consolidated school. The movement gradually got under way, and soon September morns did not see the boys and girls trudging along to the school house, but waiting for a bus. Rural districts and village cast their lot together, for the good of a wide educational community.



The first school within Wapella itself was located on the corner of Locust and First streets, and the first teacher was J. C. House, who began his instruction in 1857.

Some of the early or separate schools should be mentioned: Harrold Point named for Wapella Township settlers, Jonathon, Isam, and Winfield Harrold. This school was moved three times in its history.

Burr Oak, named for the beautiful tree still standing at that place. It was under this name tree, according to local legend, that a man died of the awful cholera epidemic in the 1850's.

Other schools bore these attractive names: Alexander, Liberty, Progress, Imperial, Cain, Davenport, Enterprise, East Hull, Brown, Heidelberg, Thorp, and Mooreville.

NARRATOR: Today, the present school plant in Wapella is already bursting its seams, which is a compliment to the community as a whole. Looking into the future and coveting the highest privileges for its youth, this village keeps its eyes upon the stars. Under the leadership of our efficient board of education and the cooperation of our administrative officers and teachers, there is no limit to the dreams that may come true. Schools, like children, never stand still; they advance or go backward. For us it is always FORWARD, UNIT NO. 5.

Narrator's interval between Episodes V and VI

NARRATOR: The lads and lassies of teen-age in the early days of Wapella were sweethearts like those today. No, they didn't ride around in autos. Not many of them had even a horse and buggy. There were no movies or radios, but it was music to the girl when the boy at the church door said, rather formally, "May I see you home?" She was very, very shy, but she usually said, "Yes."

One big social event was the annual husking-bee. When the autumn days had turned the leaves into a multi-colored scene of beauty and the harvest of the year was at hand, the young folks (and most of the older folks) got ready for a peck of frolic--for all work and no play always have made Jack a dull boy and Jill a jaded girl. So let's look into the big barn over at Turners'.

Episode VI: THE HUSKING BEE

(Big pile of corn, still in husks, in center of stage. Table with food and drink at side. One or two chairs. Characters: 8 men and 8 women, bidder and helper. Older people and children. Several adults stand talking; children scuffling about. One or two other couples arrive and join the group.)

NARRATOR: The stage is set for an old-fashioned husking bee, or corn shucking, as it was more often called in this part of the country. All the neighbors, for miles around, came together to take part in the work, such as it was and mainly the merriment. My, that's a whopper of a pile in the middle of the room. I'll bet the pigs would like that for a Christmas present.

(Two men separate from the group and begin dividing the corn into two equal piles, placing a rail between).

NARRATOR: Those fellows are expert huskers and will be team captains. Now they'll proceed to choose sides.

(The captains call names, taking turns until all the characters are located on one side or the other. Much giggling and joshing as they take their places. Finally they became quiet, awaiting the signal to begin.)

FIRST CAPTAIN: Make ready for the big race. Which side can finish its pile of corn first?

SECOND CAPTAIN: One, two, three, go!

NARRATOR: The contest is now on, and what a bunch of busy bees do we see here! Who will be the winner? It looks like a close affair, sure as you live.



(one man finds a red ear and holds it high for all to see.)

NARRATOR: Daniel has found a red ear and is entitled to his prize. Let him select his girl and have his kiss! It's Abigail he's after. Abigail, watch out! (Daniel moves toward the girl, who playfully dodges him. He runs to side of stage, catches her and gets his kiss. Squeals from the company. Ad lib talk. Now one team finishes its pile, jumps up, and shouts for victory. Several of the men begin cleaning up the stage. Others go to the table and start eating.

Fiddler and helper commence to warm up.

NARRATOR: All corn-shuckings were followed by a square dance which usually lasted until morning. Those really were the good old days--good and vigorous. Watch these folks rush for their partners, and form two sets for the first dance.

(One or two dances, with characters from the sidelines cutting in, according to custom. Finally as the fun waxes more lively, the lights dim and black out.)

#### Episode VII                      ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

NARRATOR: Rosy the skies of material prosperity; and thrilling the adventures in fields of commerce, industry and agriculture; but without a church spire pointing to God a town is like a pile of stones in a desert.

Tiny Wapella wanted this touch with Heaven, and pious souls were there to reach out after the fruits of holiness and morality. We have three voices of religion to instruct us in the history of the churches of Wapella.

1st VOICE: The first of holiness were planted by those of the Catholic faith. In 1853 the Rev. Bernard O'Hara celebrated mass in the Philip Donmigan home and St. Patrick's parish was founded. Not till 1857 was St. Patricks church erected for the ten ambitious amount of \$2,300. Priests from Bloomington served this congregation until 1873, when the Rev. Wendelin J. Revis took up his residence in Wapella. The labors of all these worthy men resulted in a second church, begun in 1882 and enlarged as late as 1909.

(Building shown here)

Pride of the physical plant is the recent complete redcoration of the interior of St. Patrick's with its blending of colors, in blue, gray, rose and gold. Art symbols dating back to the 1600's highlight the ornamentation, with the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary emphasized in the general decoration theme.

(Altar boys and worshippers leave or enter here)

2nd VOICE: Soon the Methodists arrived, prominent leaders being Thomas Loar, James Stone, Henry Morrison, the elder Mr. Martin, and Williams and Mrs. Gates. By 1857 the Wapella group formed a part of the Randolph Grove Circuit. Up went a simple building in 1858 at a total cost of \$1,500, which rather extravagantly, paid for both a cupola and a bell. Not till 1863 was the house of worship finished, to be dedicated by the Rev. Hiram Buck.

In 1871 the so-called Wapella Society was united with the DeWitt Circuit, still served by itinerant ministers, who visited some of their parishioners in their log cabins or in scattered settlements a good many miles apart. These travelling preachers were like John, the Baptist, crying in the wilderness and seeking the lost sheep of the House of Israel. They were men of strong common sense, who could draw their hearers and mold the minds of men to Christian truth and practice. Few pulpit orators since have surpassed the founders of Methodism in DeWitt County--those horseback riding parsons, with few possessions except their Bibles, but filled with zeal, to pronounce the word of God.



The Methodist Church was completely demolished by a tornado in 1891. Only the organ remained on the floor of the building. But the songs in praise of the Lord continued, a better structure was soon raised, and the contribution of this faithful flock has been immeasurable in the succeeding years.

(Church and worshippers)

THIRD VOICE: The Wapella Christian Church was organized in 1867 by Elder George Owens, of Jacksonville, Illinois. The congregation was formed by the transfer of twenty-seven members from the Long Point Church, four miles northeast of Wapella. The original elders were Joshua Carle, Peter Crum, and Stephen Rigg; the original deacons were A. D. Metz, William Crum, and James W. Karr. The Rev. George Owens served as the first minister.

The first church building was completed and dedicated in 1868, having cost approximately \$2,100. Fulfilling its purpose well, it was replaced by the present building, dedicated in 1949.

(Church and worshippers. If worshippers leave church, a song in unison could be inserted here. "Onward Christian Soldiers" would be very appropriate, especially since it has been used as the title of the episode.)

NARRATOR: As the strains of that fine old hymn die out, we hear the newer generations passing by, singing with hearty voices their increasing tribute to a prairie town--"Wonderful Wapella."

#### INTERMISSION

#### WONDERFUL WAPELLA

(Midway chorus after  
Episode VII)

Air: "Beautiful Ohio"  
(Chorus only in rather  
animated waltz time.)

Wonderful Wapella, with your magic charm  
Shining in your sunlight over street and farm  
Be our guide today,  
Take us on our way.  
Wonderful Wapella, in the twilight glow,  
Telling us the legends of the long ago,  
Shelter us, we ask you, within your golden dream,  
Bringing a blessing supreme.

Wonderful Wapella, through the coming years  
Give us love and laughter for our bitter tears;  
When our hopes are gone,  
Cheer us with your dawn.  
Wonderful Wapella, with your fresh'ning showers,  
Decking all our labors with your fragrant flowers,  
Bright star above us forever wish to be,  
Here in America free!

#### PART TWO

NARRATOR: Amid the rush of time, and making music for the avalanche of years, the wings of progress can be heard, like the notes of a great symphony. High and low, loud and soft, stray and subdued, the mounting melody fills our ears. Wapella is coming of age; Wapella is seeking a place in the sun!

DANCE: "Wings of Progress"

Episode VIII

#### ON WITH THE SHOW

NARRATOR: Of course, like most little villages and towns in those early days, Wapella had an opera house. One of the oldest buildings of our village, this opera house still stands today. Originally it was built by the Presbyterian Congregation which was organized in 1868. When the congregation disbanded the building was sold to a Mr. Spoffard who used the building for an opera house and later for a show building and skating rink. In 1908 the building was bought by William A. Graham, an elderly and honored citizen yet today. He moved the building to its present location, where in partnership with his son, Charles Graham he still maintains a



garage and trucking business. Inside this building one may still see the balcony and the remains of the old stage and dressing rooms.

Long before pictures moved or films talked--to say nothing of technicolor and cinemascope, patrons of the opera thrilled to see a rural comedy or an intense melodrama, in which the villain often wound up his mustache like a clock and sometimes even stole the heroine right through the parlor window!

"I'll bet some of you have never seen one of those old plays--"St. Elmo", "Lena Rivers", or "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Sh---, there's one on the stage right now, and we mustn't miss it. Let's slip in quietly and stand behind the last row of chairs. It's just exactly what we wanted, "Uncle Tom's Cabin"--with Simon Legree and all the rest."

(Condensation of a part of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Act V, scene 3, 1852 version)

UNCLE TOM: I have come to the dark places. I'm going through the vale of shadows. My heart sinks at times and feels just like a big lump of lead.

LEGREE (entering with Emmeline): Shut up, you black cuss! Did you think I wanted any your infernal howling. WE're home. (takes hold of her ear) You didn't ever wear earrings.

EMMELINE: No, master.

LEGREE: Well, I'll give you a pair, if you're a good girl.

EMMELINE (aside): My soul sickens as his eyes gaze upon me. His touch makes my very flesh creep.

LEGREE: Come, mistress, you go in here with me.

EMMELINE: No, No. Let me work in the fields. I don't want to be a lady.

LEGREE: Oh, you're going to be contrarry, are you? I'll soon take all of that out of you.

EMMELINE: Kill me, if you will.

LEGREE: Oh, you want to be killed, do you? Now come here, you Tom. You see, I told you I didn't buy you just for the common work; I mean to promote you and make a driver out of you, and tonight you may just as well begin to get your hand in. Now you just take this gal and flog her. You've seen enough of it to know how.

TOM: I beg master's pardon--hope master won't set me at that. It's what I ain't used to--never did, and can't do--no way possible.

LEGREE: You'll learn a pretty smart chance of things you never did know before I'm done with you. (strikes Tom with whip, 3 times.) There, now will you tell me you can't do it, (lights dim, black out).

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NARRATOR: Well, that gave us a glimpse of old-fashioned, but exciting, manner in which the shows of early period were performed, and also of the cruel days of slavery, now gone forever, thanks to Almighty God.

#### Episode IX

#### VILLAGE BOARD MEETS

NARRATOR: Ever since 1867, when it was incorporated, Wapella has had a village board consisting of eight members: a president, a clerk, and six trustees. Many things come up at a meeting of the board, whether it is hot or cold, wet or dry, these honorable officers usually end up arguing until the late hours of the night.

Let us look into a typical meeting of the years gone by. (Table with men seated around, and two or three spectators seated in rear.)



FIRST SPECTATOR: Mr. Chairman, and members of the board, I would like to obtain a franchise to operate a streetcar line in Wapella. (Board members discuss among themselves the question of letting the franchise.)

FIRST TRUSTEE: Mr. President, I make a motion that we allow C.B. & D Railway a franchise to operate a street car line in Wapella.

SECOND TRUSTEE: I second that motion.

PRESIDENT: A motion has been made and seconded that we allow C.B. & D Railway a franchise to operate a streetcar line in Wapella. All in favor will signify by saying aye. (roll call, vote taken.) (all members of the board on stage will vote aye and the motion is carried.)

NARRATOR: So it was that in 1906 the village board did vote to let a franchise for the operation of a streetcar line in Wapella. (lights dimmed) But now let us look in once more and see what this man has to say.

SPECTATOR: Mr. President, there are certain rumors going around that seem to indicate that my neighbor, John Barton, died by foul means. I'm sorta inclined to believe them, and I think something should be done about it. A body just ain't safe anymore.

MEMBER OF BOARD: There sure ain't much we can do about it now. He's done died and buried.

SECOND SPECTATOR: You can investigate, but you're so afraid that we are going to spend some of the tax money you don't know what to do. Well, you sure don't mind comin' to me and asking for my poll tax. I can't afford \$2.00, so I've got to work it out at a \$1.00 a day.

MEMBER OF BOARD: It's not our place to investigate and besides that poll tax money has to go for oak stringers for new sidewalks down in front of Daniel Thompson's place.

ANOTHER MEMBER OF BOARD: Mr. President, I make a motion that we notify the supervisor in regard to these rumors that John Barton died of foul means, and if evidence is found to notify the legal authorities and cause the body of said Mr. Barton to be exhumed and a complete investigation to be made.

ANOTHER MEMBER OF BOARD: I second that motion. (once again each member votes after his name has been called. All vote aye. Lights out).

NARRATOR: Well, there you have it. The village board is the clearing house for all such local business. They actually did let a franchise for a streetcar line and they did instruct the supervisor to investigate the possibility that John Barton died of foul means. The first and third Tuesdays of each month are still filled with tough, but interesting, problems. Wapella continues to march ahead!

Narrators interval between Episodes IX and X

It's hard to believe all the circumstances of daily living in the long ago. For instance, in these days of swimming pools and modern domestic plumbing, we can hardly realize how difficult it was to keep clean. What--a weekly bath. Only on Saturday night. That's what the poet said! Have you heard the rhapsody on

#### THE OLD WOODEN TUB

I like to get to thinking of the old days that are gone,  
When there were joys that never more the world will look upon;  
The days before inventors smoothed the little cares away  
And made, what seemed but luxuries then, the joys of every day;  
When bathrooms were exceptions, and we got our weekly scrub  
By standing in the middle of a little wooden tub.

(continued)



We had no rapid heaters, and no blazing gas to burn;  
We boiled the water on the stove, and each one took his turn.  
Sometimes to save expenses we would use one tub for two;  
The water brother Billy used, for me, would also do,  
Although an extra kettle I was granted, I admit,  
On winter nights to freshen and to warm it up a bit.

We carried water up the stairs in buckets and in pails  
And sometimes splashed it our legs, and rent the air with wails,  
But if the nights were very cold, by closing every door  
We were allowed to take our bath upon the kitchen floor.  
Beside the cheery stove we stood and gave ourselves a rub,  
In comfort most luxurious in that old wooden tub.

But modern homes no more go through that joyous weekly fun,  
And through the sitting rooms at night no half-dried children run;  
No little flying forms go past, too swift to see their charms,  
With shirts and underwear and things tucked underneath their arms.  
The home's so full of luxury now, it's almost like a club---  
I sometimes wish we could go back to that old wooden tub!

#### Episode X

#### THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

NARRATOR: The seasons came and went over the prairie. Most of the people of Wapella were well and happy, but in the course of time came occasional illness, and occasional death.

Although our town does not now have the services of a local doctor, its history would not be complete without portrayal of a few scenes of what some of our pioneer physicians put up with. They did not have the modern facilities, the new drugs, hospitals, good roads, and fine automobiles we know today. The doctors of Wapella's early days were pretty much on their own. The practice of medicine consisted mainly of bleeding, blistering, purging, and the abundant use of emetics. They had to have faith and courage to meet the dreaded epidemics such as those Dr. John Wright, Wapella's first physician, faced in 1859. The No. 1 killer was cholera.

Let's go down the street and take a peep into a simple home as Dr. Wright makes his faithful daily rounds.

(Stage lights up, showing several patients lying on mats or beds; groaning and suffering pain. Doctor enters and speaks to a harried woman.)

DOCTOR: Good morning, Mrs. Jones. How are your charges today?

MRS. JONES: Oh, Doctor, Sue is worse, David is no better, and John can't seem to change a bit. I have done everything I know to do. Jack Smith was over. Hardly able to move. Said his mother had died and his Dad hasn't been dead a week. No funeral or nothing. Said they just buried them out in the orchard. What do we have to look forward to?

DOCTOR: Courage, my good woman. From my observations your people will live, but anything can happen yet. I'm doing all I can, but it seems to me it is a very little, though that's a statement I shouldn't want to make to a patient. We must have faith and trust in the Almighty. True, many of our friends are gone, but you can rest assured as long as there is breath in my body. I'll be with the sick.

WOMAN: What will become of Jack Smith, with his folks dead and no close relatives. They were very poor people.

DOCTOR: Well, the DeWitt County Board of Supervisors will meet tomorrow, and they will decide when he'll be auctioned off to the lowest bidder.

WOMAN: To the lowest bidder? I didn't know we had white slaves in Illinois.

DOCTOR: I'm sorry, but this will be the one who makes the lowest bid for taking care of a dependent needy person, or a feeble-minded person for a certain period. It's for one or two years, or until



a certain age like 16-18. DeWitt County has done this for several years now. Well, just follow my orders and I'll see you when I can. My horse is going lame and the crèeks are up, so it'll take me longer to make the rounds. Remember this as long as I'm able I'll be here when needed.

(stage darkens)

NARRATOR: And that's exactly what Dr. Wright did. Most of the early citizens of Wapella and the community did live and regained their health. But 8 years later another enemy of human life lurked in the background. It was in 1867 that small pox struck right and left among rich and poor, and those who survived carried their scars to their graves. Inoculation was unknown at that time and the disease had to run its natural course. Dr. was the man of the hour during that crisis.

But there were other phases of the physicians art. Human beings often have ailments which are not caused by germs, and which don't need a microscope for diagnosis. These are caused by people themselves, by other humans, or animals, and require special medical treatment. Let's look in on Dr. Davis as he has his share of trouble with a cantankerous public. (Patients sitting in chairs around the wall).

DOCTOR: (Looking in prim maiden's throat): Say ah. Once more. That's better. (Fills out a blank).

GIRL: Castor oil is always what you prescribe.

DOCTOR: Best for what ails you.

GIRL: Horrors. (stamps off, head high).

(boy hobbles across the room)

DOCTOR: What's your trouble, son.

BOY: Oh, Nellie stepped on my big toe.

DOCTOR: Where's your shoes.

BOY: Don't have any for summer.

DOCTOR: Guess we'll have to wrap up that toe. And keep away from Nellie.

(farmer approaches doctor, with a limp)

FARMER: Well, Doc, I can walk tolerable enough after you fixed my leg. What's the bill.

DOCTOR: Let's see. I made 3 trips and used medicine and drugs. \$10 will cover everything.

FARMER: Ten dollars! Land's sake! I ain't seen \$10 for months.

DOCTOR: Well, I need some feed for my horse, and I'm out of hay. To make it easy on you, I'll take a wagon full of oats and a hayrack full of hay, plus \$2.00 cash when you get it.

FARMER: O.K. Doc, you drive a hard bargain, but you sure fixed me up. I'll bring the oats in tomorrow and the hay when ready. Say, I don't like the looks of some of those railroad men who are in town now.

DOCTOR: You'll be better off if you don't cross one of those fellows. If you do you'll have another doctor bill to pay. Say, what's going on outside (commotion outside with loud voices arguing. Enter constable, holding two men by the collar.)

CONSTABLE: Here, Doc, patch these devils up while I chase down some more. This makes the 6th fight this week. Two gun battles right on Main street. I'm going to get more pay or quit my job. It's safer in the army. The civil war was never like this. (Doctor proceeds to bandage them up.)



NARRATOR: Saturday night again on Main Street. It's getting late but the country people must buy their groceries, as well as other things needed before they can leave town. There go the Swearingens, the Ives, the Walshes, and many others--to Willis' or is it Park's, to Troxel's or is it Burke's to Maxwell's or is it Houchins? Some folks are hurrying around the corner to Bells or Mastins, and some of the ladies are taking their last chance at the Gassard Millinery Shop. A few have been down to Delaney's or Craigs to settle an account, if they have any money left. Those men with white aprons have come out to pick up their remaining produce and other supplies and take them back into the stores where they will spend a quiet Sunday, waiting to be sold next week, perhaps on another busy Saturday night. It has been a busy day, and a long day, and the kids are tired and should be taken home to bed. (couples pass, almost dragging their small children. Ad lib fretting, etc. One little girl breaks loose and has to be chased and spanked.)

NARRATOR: But let's have a last look, this time at Halloween. See those youngsters parading in costume. They get a big kick out of such a masquerade, and so do we. Wait a minute. There at the end of the line, but not a part of it, some are boys with a gate and a buggy wheel. Behind them came two others, this time with boards. One of the boards has a crescent design and the other a diamond shaped opening. Well, boys will be boys--and tomorrow morning some back-yard castle will be missing or badly dilapidated. I'll bet the old windmill is grinning down at that. The last revelles are going home. Two couples are passing down the street. They aren't going to break any windows, or put a wagon on top of the Post Office, but they do feel the spirit of the time and there's that ladder on the mill--always a challenge to youth. One of the boys is really going up. He's gone far enough and turns to salute his companions below.

GIRL ON GROUND: What time is it up there?

BOY ON LADDER: (with mock heroic voice): One O'clock, in the town of Wapella. (others laugh and throw pebbles up at him).

(Just then an old man, in hight gown appears at a doorway, shaking his fist and yelling. You get down from there and stop that noise, here in the middle of the night. (Quick blackout).)

NARRATOR: The old windmill looks down on the nearly empty street cluttered with trash from one end to the others. And it is also wisely looks into the future, realizing that in times to come the names on the buildings along Main Street will be changed, as they have been changed in the past; and that some of the buildings themselves will disappear and new ones will take their places. It also knows, as the events of the coming years rush to meet us, that even the old windmill sage of Wapella, successor to Chief Wapellao, himself, will be torn down and perhaps buried under concrete slabs, and the tread of strange and hurrying feet will be heard under a different sun or under a different sky. This old windmill which from its commanding position, has seen and been thrilled by all the business beneath him, by visitors from a distance, by many school children, by young folks going away to college, even by boys leaving for foreign wars, must storke its beard and whisper to itself, "After all, Wapella's a good town."

Anyway, Main Street is always Main Street. No two such streets are ever alike, but all are similar in traffic, trade, and tradition--forming together a grand and glorious American institution.



of a last stand for human liberty. Wapella had a part.

Thus, Wapella, heart of the prairie, far removed from the great centers of population and government, has participated in some of the most crucial events of American History.

Now in this Centennial year of 1954, though clouds of despotism and military conflict gather over many places of the earth, we face the future with a firm faith in our Wapella neighbors, our precious native land, and the justice of an omnipresent God.

Episode 13:

#### CITIZENS OF TOMORROW

NARRATOR: Behind us lie a hundred years--years in which Wapella had its beginning, and grew, and added to the American life and scene. Each facet of the century has contributed its part. (Spotlight on selected representatives from all other scenes. Blackout.)

NARRATOR: These hundred years have become history, but time neither stops nor tarries. Now we must focus our view on the years ahead. We face the future with pride and faith in our youth of Wapella. It is to them we entrust the history making that lies beyond. They are the citizens of tomorrow.

(spotlight on a group of children, boy with fishing pole, 2 girls with doll and equipment, boy and girl with bicycles, boy with baseball uniform, child on tricycle, child pulling wagon, child roller skating.) Second group of children playing tag, finally scampering off stage.)

NARRATOR: Herein lies the wealth of Wapella and herein lies the key to our future. They are tomorrow's doctor, nurse, farmers, teacher, serviceman, servicewoman, senator, housewife--yes, and spaceman, too, and all the others that make up the ranks in this broad land. They are our responsibility. They are our citizens of tomorrow.

(As each one is enumerated, another spotlight covers that representative dressed to fit the part. When all are arranged in a semi-circle at back of stage they unite in the last stanza of America ("Our Fathers God, to Thee"). Lights dimmed. Fireworks display, flag, blackout).

Closing Chorus: "Heart of the Prairie" will follow, unannounced, and at last line is sung figure of Chief Wapello is spotted at center of stage. After brief blackout for his get-away through rear curtains all ground lights are turned on.

CLOSING CHORUS

HEART OF THE PRAIRIE

Air: Beautiful Dreamer  
strong rhythm with big final  
crescendo and climax)

Heart of the prairie, far from the sea,  
Lovely Wapella forever shall be,  
Here in the west-land gladly we live,  
Lovely Wapella, our praises we give.  
On through the ages, endless in time  
Here will you furnish a favorite clime;  
Here shall we linger, wending our way  
Blessing close of each beautiful day,  
Blessing the close of each beautiful day.

Heart of the prairie, wondrously fine,  
Now may God grant His favor divine;  
Now may His ever radiant face,  
Lovely Wapella, shed bountiful grace.  
Far in the future visions appear  
Showing the signs of each beautiful year;  
Lovely Wapella, joyful and free,  
Heart of the prairie forever shall be,  
Heart of the prairie forever shall be!



Episode XII

WAPELLA IN THE WARS

Trumpet Fanfare

Few measures of "Stars and Stripes Forever"

Group of school children at attention before large flag.

NARRATOR: In our review of Wapella's first hundred years, we cannot forget that Wapella is an American town. The flag flying there symbolizes the spirit of our village and our country.

But our country has not always been indivisible. Differing opinions have threatened to rend North from South, state from state, and brother from brother. So, Wapella, as a community participated in the terrible Civil War.

MUSIC: "Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground" or "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

STAGE ACTION: Civil War soldiers march through. One should carry large torch, symbolizing torch of liberty.

NARRATOR: Yes, when Father Abraham Lincoln issued the call, Wapella responded. Many from the community marched into war, carrying the torch of freedom. Leaving their plows, their homes, their loved ones, these men of long ago vowed to keep the nation indivisible and fought to make men free.

MUSIC: When Johnny Comes Marching Home.

NARRATOR: And in the homes they had left, there was an emptiness; and there was lonely waiting until Johnny would come marching home again. So, in hope and faith, they waited.

STAGE ACTION: Mother in period costume rocks baby in old fashioned cradle while reading letter. She reads, weeps, then kneels in prayer. As mother rises from prayer, man rushes in with paper with large headline "Lee Surrenders--War Over." Man and woman dance jubilantly.

MUSIC: (to begin as man and woman begin to dance--"When Johnny comes-----").

NARRATOR: Yes, there would be a jubilee--except in those homes where Johnny would never come marching home. So, it was that many men did not return from the Civil War. How immortal are the words of Abraham Lincoln, summing up not only the meaning of the war, but the challenge peace presented to those from whom the sacrifice was made.

Tall man impersonating Lincoln gives portion of Gettysburgh address.

NARRATOR: And so these honored dead, who gave their last full measure of devotion, passed on the torch of freedom shining brightly over a nation once more united in peace.

STAGE ACTION: Civil War soldier re-enters with torch and passes it to small child--patting him affectionately on the head.

MUSIC: America the Beautiful.

NARRATOR: In the time that followed, America prospered and tried to live in peace with hereworld neighbors. The men who returned from war forged their swords into plowshares and prayed that war which was an evil, might never threaten their homes again.

NARRATOR: And so the years and decades marched by--1865--1875--1885--1895--We rushed to Cuba to help a little republic establish itself in the great universal struggle for freedom. Wapella had a part. 1905-1915--We heard the call again from Europe, and crossed the sea to lend a hand for world democracy. Wapella had a part. 1920-1930-1940--Again from Europe and Asia the Macedonian cry. Come over, with gigantic effort, to resist the most dangerous dictatorships the world has ever known. Wapella had a part. 1950---Again the boys were off across the world, this time in Korea, not to aid a single nation for its own political ends, but to assist a small, but courageous country that had become the symbol